

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1226

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 30, 2005

Title: An act relating to campaign contribution limits.

Brief Description: Adjusting application of campaign contribution limits.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability (originally sponsored by Representatives Schual-Berke, Tom, Haigh, Cody, Fromhold, Jarrett, Hudgins, Conway, Appleton, Flannigan, Murray, McCoy, Lantz, Hasegawa, Williams, Kagi, Ormsby, Morrell, Chase, Dickerson, Kenney and Sells).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/05, 59-39.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/29/05, 3/30/05 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Fairley, Haugen, Kline and Pridemore.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, McCaslin and Mulliken.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The Fair Campaign Practices Act was enacted following passage of Initiative 134 in 1992. The initiative imposed campaign contribution limits, further regulated independent expenditures, restricted the use of public funds for political purposes, and required public officials to report gifts received in excess of \$50. The contribution limits imposed by Initiative 134 apply only to elections for statewide office and state legislative office. They do not apply to candidates for judicial office.

Contribution limits imposed on an individual, a union or business, or a political action committee are an aggregate of \$675 per election to a candidate for state legislative office, and an aggregate of \$1,350 per election to a candidate for statewide office.

Limits also apply to political parties. State party central committees, minor party committees, and legislative caucus committees may contribute an aggregate of up to \$0.68 per registered voter in the candidate's district for an election cycle. County central committees and legislative district committees may contribute an aggregate of up to \$0.34 per registered voter in the candidate's district. Contributions received from county central committees and legislative district committees combined may not exceed an amount more than \$0.34 times the number of registered voters statewide to any one candidate.

These limits are adjusted for inflation by the Public Disclosure Commission every two years.

Summary of Amended Bill: Campaign contribution limits are extended to apply to candidates for Superior Court, the Washington Supreme Court, and Court of Appeals judges.

Contribution limits imposed for Superior Court judges may not exceed an aggregate of \$675 per election and for offices for the Washington Supreme Court and Court of Appeals an aggregate of \$1,350 per election from an individual, a union or business, or a Political Action Committee. Political party contribution limits also apply.

Contributions to candidates for whom the new limits apply that are received before the effective date of the act are considered to be contributions for the purposes of campaign contribution limits statutes. Contributions that exceed the limitations and have not been spent by the recipient by the effective date of this Act must be disposed of in accordance with RCW 42.17.095, disposal of surplus funds, except that it may not be held by the candidate for a future election or be used for non-reimbursed public office-related expenses.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for the original bill.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The Walsh Commission recommended measures similar to this striking amendment but they were neither enacted nor enacted into court rule. Public perception, appearance of fairness and public confidence in the judiciary are all protected by this striker. This will prevent problems.

Testimony Against: None.

Other: The sponsor, Representative Schual-Berke, testified as strongly preferring the underlying bill rather than the striking amendment.

Who Testified: PRO: John Ruhl, King County Bar Association; Charlie Wiggins, American Judicature Society. OTHER: Representative Schual-Berke, prime sponsor.